



FACT SHEET

USAID SUPPORTS GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Below are highlights of USAID activities conducted in 2008 that support women and girls in the areas of economic opportunities and entrepreneurship; political participation and leadership; education; gender-based violence; legal rights; trafficking in persons; and HIV and AIDS.

Economic Opportunities and Entrepreneurship

Women make a significant contribution to the global economy and empowering women economically can lift entire families and communities out of poverty.

- USAID's Business Climate and Legal and Institutional Reform program will identify the barriers that women face in starting and maintaining businesses and will give technical help to remove or neutralize gender-related barriers in business in developing countries. The program's approach will demonstrate how increased gender equality and an improved business climate reinforce each other.
- USAID enabled women-owned enterprises in Afghanistan to receive nearly 50,000 loans for a total of \$10.1 million to, an 11 percent increase over the previous year. USAID established 10 women's business associations and continued support for the Afghan Women's Business Federation, now serving 69 associations and 28,000 members.
- In Burkina Faso 28,205 women gained access to credit, savings opportunities and training in business skills development, which enabled them to increase their household revenue. USAID continues to support a new credit product that offers larger loans and extended repayment terms. This product helped clients to diversify their income-generating activities, which has increased their revenue and reduced their vulnerability to food insecurity.

Political Participation and Leadership

Increasing women's political participation and leadership capacity are key ingredients for ensuring that women's needs are recognized and taken into account in policy formation and decision-making.

- The civil society-led campaign in Colombia, "Más Mujeres, Más Política" (More Women, More Politics) aimed to increase the participation of women in government. The campaign developed draft legislation to assure representation of women on party ballots at the national, departmental and municipal levels. In addition, USAID trained over 3,000 women on issues related to political parties, including their management and operations.

- USAID programs increased women's political representation in Bolivia by providing women with the skills necessary to run a successful campaign and be elected to political office. Working with the Association of Women Municipal Council Members, USAID helped women leaders introduce a draft law to combat violence against elected women representatives, a persistent problem that prevents more women from running for office and from continuing in that capacity once elected.
- Leadership must start early; a USAID public-private partnership has recently been initiated in Egypt, Honduras, India, Malawi, Tanzania and Yemen. The goal is to promote 10 to 14-year-old girl leaders in vulnerable communities by:
 1. cultivating opportunities to practice leadership skills;
 2. creating public-private partnerships to promote girls' leadership; and
 3. enhancing global knowledge to implement and promote girls' leadership programs.

Education

Education is a powerful tool for reducing poverty and redressing inequality, improving health and social well-being and creating a foundation for sustained economic growth.

- Community-based activities in Afghanistan enabled 190,000 girls and women to acquire literacy, numeracy and other basic skills. USAID also provided textbooks, constructed girls' schools, and funded the operation of a women's dormitory at Kabul University that increases the opportunity for women residing outside of Kabul to receive a higher education.
- USAID, in partnership with the Ministry of Education in Senegal, improved policies related to the recruitment and retention of female teachers and administrators. As a result, approximately 50 percent of the teachers in USAID-supported schools in one region are female as compared to the national average of 20 percent. To further promote women's leadership in education, USAID designed, developed, and distributed 1,000 calendars that stressed the importance of women in their community and conducted six-day leadership trainings for 100 female teachers.
- To broaden perceptions of men's and women's roles in an effort to expand the range of future opportunities for girls and boys, USAID is supporting Sesame Street in Bangladesh. The television program, which provides pre-school education, included episodes that showcased competencies and successes of women as engineers, doctors, pilots and writers and showed men in traditional women's roles.
- USAID has enabled 1,063 rural girls in Morocco to access middle school education by developing a system for academic and social support in secure dormitories. Last year the program expanded to include 198 dormitories housing 16,688 students, the vast majority of whom are girls. The program will expand this year to include government-sponsored dormitories, thus strongly improving access to middle school for girls.

Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence is a serious human rights and public health issue throughout the world that undermines efforts to achieve sustainable development.

- USAID's Safe Schools Program in Ghana and Malawi created safe school environments for girls and boys. The Safe Schools Program reached over 30,000 students through training for students, teachers and community counselors, a unified teachers' code of

conduct, community mobilization and national-level advocacy. The training programs for teachers, students and community counselors are tools that can be used globally to reduce violence against girls and boys in schools.

- USAID works with local communities to reduce the harmful traditional practices of bride abduction, bride price and early marriage from being perpetrated against young girls living in rural areas. In Ethiopia, more than 15,000 community members attended awareness raising sessions, which included working against harmful traditional practices and gender-based violence and promoting human rights. This has resulted in the prevention of some early marriages for girls as young as 10 years old.

Legal Rights

With the granting and enforcement of their legal rights, women can better access land and property ownership, financial services, education, fair employment and other services that reduce their vulnerability to exploitation or abuse.

- In Cambodia, USAID supports legal-aid organizations to provide legal consultation and representation to victims of gender-based violence. USAID also funded local human rights organizations to conduct awareness-raising concerning women's rights and violence against women. USAID sponsored the development, production and broadcasting of an eight-episode legal drama series for television entitled "Scales of Justice." Four episodes of this television series focused on legal procedures for cases of domestic violence and rape.
- USAID strengthened the Women's Bar Association in Azerbaijan by helping the Association find solutions to the professional challenges and barriers facing Azerbaijani women, and providing a forum for women to lobby for their rights.
- In Jordan, working closely with the Judicial Institute and the Ministry of Justice in revising the curriculum and admissions criteria, USAID contributed to increasing the number of female students in the Judicial Diploma Program from 4.4 percent from 1990 to 2004, to 46 percent from 2006 to 2008, thus eventually increasing the number of female judges. USAID supported the Judges' Fund that provides two hundred scholarships for law students, with more than 50 percent going to females.
- In Rwanda, USAID promoted a more gender-equitable land policy to improve the law itself and to train Parliamentarians to interpret and enforce the law. This has been particularly important during the country's reconstruction as the government has granted land access to women displaced, widowed or otherwise affected by the conflict. This activity combines strengthening women's rights to land to promote economic growth and legislative strengthening to promote property and other laws more supportive of women's rights and needs.

Trafficking in Persons

Trafficking in persons, which is fueled by a complex set of factors including the low status of women, poverty and unemployment, demand for cheap labor and sex, corruption and porous international borders, denies women and girls their rights and undermines the fabric of family and society.

- USAID has expanded awareness for trafficking victims by joining with the private sector to reach broader audiences. For example, to create awareness of trafficking in Asia, USAID collaborating with MTV to target a young media-savvy audience through a

television special featuring well-known models, actors and musicians reaching as many as 560 million households.

- To address the growing number of trafficked persons coming from Uzbekistan (estimated to be at least 500,000 people), USAID developed informational materials to raise awareness of this issue among labor migrants arriving in Kazakhstan. USAID also supports hotlines and a network of ten non-governmental organizations (NGO) to support counter-trafficking activities. The hotlines averages 4,200 calls a quarter, with staff providing legal assistance and shelter referrals. NGOs have been integral in developing awareness campaigns through newspapers, TV, radio programs, theater plays and public service announcements.
- In Bangladesh, USAID trained 144 law enforcement officers to respond to trafficking incidents more effectively and 902 lawyers and prosecutors to manage cases more efficiently. Trafficking survivors also received legal services through a coordinated referral system. A total of 8,170 locally elected government representatives, including 1,751 women, attended informational sessions on how to protect vulnerable members of their communities, especially women and children, from being trafficked.
- In Uganda, USAID assisted female parliamentarians in achieving the passage of an anti-trafficking bill. This strengthened their voice to provide greater legal protections for women and children.

HIV and AIDS

Gender inequality and violence make women and girls more vulnerable to HIV infection while economic and social dependence on men limits women's ability to negotiate safer sex and access HIV and AIDS services.

- USAID has increased its support to women's organizations to address the feminization of the epidemic in Senegal. Surveys of military personnel indicated that older (40-49) married men have the highest rate of prevalence estimated at 2.4 percent. Due to these findings, USAID strengthened the existing program by adding more sensitization activities for military wives and their families.
- A key component of Cambodia's HIV prevention program is focused on changing male norms and promoting equality between men and women. Prevention programs used strategies targeted to young women to better protect themselves by negotiating sexual choices. USAID intensified efforts to reduce fear and violence that women experienced when disclosing a positive result. Prevention programs targeting men work to promote better communication between couples, thereby encouraging couples to discuss self-risk assessment, family planning methods and HIV prevention.
- In Honduras USAID reached 138,689 people with comprehensive HIV prevention messages. Gender issues were explored in depth with both men and women, especially in regards to condom negotiation and motivation toward healthier behaviors, such as partner reduction and abstinence. The social marketing program expanded sales of affordable condoms to a total of over 1,200 high-risk outlets.

For more information about USAID's Women in Development Programs please go to www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/

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